ILAC Working Paper 10

Partnering in International Agricultural Research for Development: Lessons from the ILAC Learning Laboratory

by

Participants in the ILAC Learning Laboratory workshop
in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2009

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Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative
c/o Bioversity International, Via dei Tre Denari 472a,
00057 Maccarese (Fiumicino), Rome, Italy
Tel: (39) 0661181, Fax: (39) 0661979661, email: **ilac@cgiar.org**, URL: **www.cgiar-ilac.org**

The ILAC initiative fosters learning from experience and use of the lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programmes. The mission of the ILAC Initiative is to develop, field test and introduce methods and tools that promote organizational learning and institutional change in CGIAR centres and their partners, to expand the contributions of agricultural research to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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Abstract

This paper presents results of a workshop on partnerships in agricultural research for development (AR4D) organized by the Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The workshop brought together members of the ILAC Learning Laboratory to discuss a wide range of issues related to partnership, including how and why partnership is important for their work, the types of partner they engage with, the various roles played by partners in achieving common objectives, and the types of relationships developed over time. They also discussed obstacles and issues that need attention to enable more effective partnering. Drawing upon these discussions, the workshop participants produced this paper, which summarizes their experiences and draws out common themes and lessons. It presents an overview of the role of partnership in AR4D and summarizes experiences with partnership in the Learning Laboratory, including success factors and areas requiring further attention. Beyond documenting the experiences of the Learning Laboratory members, the paper aims to stimulate dialogue about the use of partnership and improvements needed in the way organizations participate in and manage partnerships in AR4D.

Foreword

In September 2009, several collaborative agricultural research for development (AR4D) programmes came together under the umbrella of the ILAC Learning Laboratory to explore their experiences with organizing and managing partnerships. Partnerships are fundamentally important to collaborative research and are of increasing importance to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). In fact, partnership management has emerged as a critical issue in the ongoing reform process in the CGIAR.

In the context of AR4D, a partnership is *a collaborative relationship with mutually agreed objectives and the exchange or sharing of resources or knowledge for generating research outputs or fostering innovation.* These partnerships include networks, alliances, consortia and similar forms of multi-organizational collaboration. The Learning Laboratory meeting included working sessions and plenary discussions where the participants addressed such topics as:

- experiences in partnership management
- the added value of partnering and the costs in terms of time and effort
- learning objectives of partnerships
- key lessons learnt
- the most critical ways of addressing them

The experiences were synthesized into major success factors for AR4D partnerships.

After the workshop, a small writing team organized the information produced during the workshop, and added information on the participating programmes (e.g., their aims, organizational features, membership, and evolution since establishment). Examples from the programmes were included to illustrate the main points made in the paper. This paper is therefore the result of the Learning Laboratory workshop and its follow up, building directly on the experiences of Learning Laboratory members.

On behalf of the ILAC Initiative, I would like to thank the programme representatives, who enthusiastically participated in the workshop and the later development of the paper, the staff of Pico Team Southern Africa, who facilitated the meeting and documented its results, and Kay Sayce, who edited the paper.

We hope that readers will find this summary of experiences with partnership in a range of contexts useful for informing their own work and that it will stimulate further discussions about the organization and management of partnerships in AR4D. The ultimate aim of the paper is to contribute to improving the role of partnerships in making agricultural research more relevant, effective and user oriented.

Jamie L. Watts, ILAC Co-ordinator

1. Introduction

1.1. Partnership opportunities and challenges

Organizations throughout the world are working in partnership to address complex social, economic, and environmental problems. Partnership arrangements (co-operative relationships between people or groups who share responsibility for achieving common goals) include such entities as networks, alliances, consortia and partnership programs (Horton *et al.*, 2009). Partnership has become central to the *modus operandi* of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other organizations concerned with international agricultural research for development (AR4D) – research carried out by international, regional and national organizations that aim to produce development results in the medium term (in 5–10 years).

In the 1970s and 1980s, research networks were commonly used to test potential new crop varieties, implement regional programmes and strengthen research capacity. Since then, declining donor support and local funding for national agricultural research institutes (NARIs), increasing recognition of the importance of market forces in driving technological change and the emergence of innovation systems approaches have all stimulated the development of partnerships to promote agricultural innovation, reduce poverty and achieve other development goals. Partnerships frequently emerge when organizations are faced with complex socio-economic and environmental problems and realize they lack the capacity to address them on their own.

The R&D partnerships that have been used for many years to generate and test agricultural technology have generally engaged agricultural researchers from different disciplines or organizations, to the exclusion of other potential actors in innovation systems. In contrast, AR4D partnerships that address broad social, economic or environmental problems typically involve a much more diverse set of actors, which might include not only researchers but also policy-makers, extension agents, market agents and representatives of universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmer organizations, community-based organizations and other civil society organizations (CSOs).

In the context of AR4D, some partnerships aim to produce high-quality research outputs; others focus on 'downstream' objectives, seeking to improve a situation (e.g., reducing poverty) or to change behaviour (e.g., encouraging the uptake of new farming practices). Many partnerships span the continuum from research to the application of new knowledge and sharing lessons from experience. The specific objectives of a partnership might include:

- increasing knowledge of under-used or threatened plant or livestock genetic resources, and identifying opportunities for their use to improve the livelihoods of the poor
- enhancing opportunities for the exploitation of high-value agricultural and forest products by the poor
- developing options for the sustainable management of water, land and forest resources upon which the poor depend
- improving policies and facilitating institutional innovation to increase support to the poor

Partnerships in AR4D tend to emphasize collective knowledge generation and the adaptation of new information or technology by users to site-specific situations. Because of imbalances among partners in terms of their access to resources, information and power, AR4D partnerships also commonly emphasize capacity building and empowerment in order to establish the conditions and relationships for effective collective action.

1.2. Purpose and background of the paper

Although partnerships are central to AR4D, few organizations working in this field have taken stock of their experiences with partnerships or have thoroughly reviewed the knowledge about partnerships that has accumulated in other fields. Additionally, few agricultural research organizations have developed and implemented formal partnership strategies, policies or guidelines that embody lessons from experience, promote consistency and coherence across their partnership work, and enhance the impact of research on development.

This paper aims to provide professionals who are engaged in, or support, AR4D with actionable information on the organization and management of partnerships in international AR4D. It summarizes the partnership experiences of the managers of six AR4D programmes. We developed the paper based on a meeting of the ILAC Learning Laboratory held in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2009.

The ILAC Initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of collaborative research programmes to facilitate pro-poor agricultural innovation. Central to ILAC's strategy is a Learning Laboratory in which professionals from collaborative AR4D programmes come together to share knowledge and experiences, experiment with new approaches for facilitating pro-poor innovation, and evaluate the results. The current Learning Laboratory programmes are:

- *African Highlands Initiative (AHI)*, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (www.cgiar-ilac.org/content/african-highlands-initiative-ahi)
- *Alianza Cambio Andino (CA)*, in Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador (www.cambioandino.org/)
- *Learning in Knowledge Intensive Agricultural Systems (KIA)* in India
- *Musa Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (MUSALAC)* (www.musilac.com/)
- *Smallholder Dairy Project (SDP)*, in Kenya (http://www.smallholderdairy.org/)
- *Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD)* network, in South-East and South Asia (www.eseap.cipotato.org/upward)

The Learning Laboratory programmes all aim to reduce poverty in rural households and agricultural communities. Poor farmers and other intended users of research results are significantly involved in the programmes' R&D activities. The programmes involve collaboration among various types of organizations (e.g., international national research organizations, NGOs, local government agencies, farmers' groups, policy organizations and universities). The programme leaders are committed to sharing their experiences and critically reflecting upon them, learning from others and striving towards continuous improvement.

1.3. Organization of the paper

The paper has five main sections. After this introductory section, which provides background information, Section 2 discusses what partnerships are and why individuals and organizations engage in them. It also identifies various dimensions of partnerships and four broad types of partnerships in international AR4D.

Section 3 describes the Learning Laboratory programmes in more detail, including the context, history, objectives and organization of their partnerships. Section 4 presents the main lessons for organizing and managing partnerships, illustrated with practical examples from the programmes. Section 5 presents ways forward for the programmes and for ILAC that address unanswered questions and concerns.

The Annexes include a list of the authors of this paper (the participants in the 2009 Learning Laboratory workshop), useful websites and references (including those cited in the paper), and summaries of each of the six Learning Laboratory programmes.

2. What do we mean by partnership?[1]

2.1. A working definition of partnership

Partnership has been defined in many ways in different contexts. In the business world, a partnership refers to a type of business entity in which partners (generally individual owners) share in the profits or losses of a business. In AR4D, however, when people refer to a partnership, they are usually thinking of a collaborative relationship involving people from two or more organizations pursuing common objectives.

In the context of the ILAC Learning Laboratory, we define partnership as a collaborative relationship among individuals, groups or organizations who pursue mutually agreed objectives and exchange or share resources or knowledge for the purpose of generating research outputs (i.e., new knowledge or technology) or fostering innovation (i.e., the application of new ideas or technology for practical ends).

[1] This section draws heavily on Horton *et al.* (2009).

This definition is broad enough to cover many types of informal and formal arrangements that seek to promote the generation of knowledge and its practical application in AR4D, ranging from loose knowledge-sharing to more integrated collaborative arrangements. It includes public-private partnerships and those that involve individuals and organizations from only one sector (e.g., researchers in the public sector), but it excludes teamwork that does not cross organizational boundaries, as well as contract work or outsourcing where there is a strictly commercial exchange of resources, rather than a sharing of resources and knowledge.

The central feature of a partnership is the sharing of resources, benefits and risks. Typically, it is also characterized by a tendency or aspiration to develop enduring inter-personal or inter-organizational relationships. Another common feature of partnerships is that they tend to change and evolve over time. In some cases they begin as arrangements hosted and managed centrally and evolve into more horizontal arrangements with broader decision-making and mutual accountability. In other cases, they begin as the 'grassroots' initiatives of researchers or development professionals and then evolve into more formalized arrangements. Examples of both of these patterns of evolution are found among the ILAC Learning Laboratory programmes.

2.2. Why partner?

Partnerships inevitably involve costs associated with communication, negotiation, participatory decision-making and collective action. In view of these costs, which are seldom inconsequential, one must ask: 'Why partner'? Three reasons are commonly identified in the literature on partnership. One reason is to gain access to resources (including knowledge) that are not available within a single organization. A second reason is to improve knowledge management across the boundaries separating organizations that share similar long-term goals (e.g., sustainable poverty reduction) but traditionally work in isolation.[2] A third reason is to build the capacity to influence policies or economic activity by participating in social networks. The experience of the Learning Laboratory programmes suggests that there is a fourth reason, which is to create a safe and nurturing space for learning and innovation that is not present within one's own organization.

2.3. Dimensions and types of partnership

Relationships that fall under the broad umbrella of partnership vary in many ways, such as:

- degree of formality of the relationship
- degree of centralization of governance arrangements
- number and diversity of partners
- geographical focus / diversity
- duration of engagement
- degree of donor dependence
- diversity and complexity of objectives
- degree of resource and benefit sharing
- intensity of communication among partners

In the ILAC Learning Laboratory, we have found it useful to think in terms of four broad types of partnership in AR4D, categorized according to their overall objectives:

- *Research partnerships* aim to produce research outputs in the form of public goods. The members of the partnership are usually researchers in either public or private organizations. The degree of formality ranges from highly informal, in the case of professional communities, to highly formal, where the participating organizations sign letters of understanding that detail issues of budget and intellectual property rights.
- *Partnerships for capacity development and knowledge sharing* aim to develop the capacity of partners to share and use new knowledge, rather than produce new knowledge *per se*. Such partnerships typically involve partners with distinct but complementary knowledge bases (e.g.,

[2] The importance of boundary management is discussed by Cash *et al.* (2003).

'learning alliances', as described by Lundy *et al.*, 2005) or those with different levels of capacity (e.g., North-South partnerships).

- *Partnerships for market- or value-chain development* aim to strengthen market chains or their support systems (e.g., local governing councils or regulation bodies) in ways that benefit poor producers, traders or consumers. Such partnerships tend to involve diverse members, all of whom have a stake in the development of the market or value chain in question. Typically, an R&D organization initiates this type of partnership to improve communication and mediation among market-chain actors in order to stimulate innovation within the market chain. Leadership might later be transferred to one or more of the participating market-chain actors and become institutionalized within the partnership itself. These partnerships are often thought of as 'innovation platforms' (Thiele *et al*., 2009).
- *Advocacy partnerships* aim to influence public opinion and policies. They involve diverse partners in order to improve communication among them and strengthen the capacity of researchers, CSOs and economic actors to influence public opinion and policy-making. Such partnerships often draw ideas and principles from networks and use a wide range of communication and networking strategies to achieve these goals.

Although it is useful to think in terms of these four types of partnership, they are seldom found in practice exactly as described. Frequently, the different types are combined in a single partnership, or the main thrust of a partnership evolves over time, as progress is made on one front (e.g., research) and the main constraint to development shifts from knowledge production to knowledge sharing, market-chain development or policy influence.

3. Experiences with partnering in the ILAC Learning Laboratory programmes

The Learning Laboratory has brought together six AR4D programmes to share their knowledge and experiences, experiment with new approaches for facilitating pro-poor innovation, and evaluate the results. This section describes these programmes from the perspective of their experiences with partnering, to show the environment in which the partnerships have operated and lessons have been drawn.

The programmes represent both 'mature cases', with a track record with several years of research or pro-poor innovation, and more recently established 'emerging cases'.

3.1. Objectives and approaches of the partnerships

All the Learning Laboratory programmes aim to reduce poverty and engage resource-poor actors (e.g., farmers and informal traders) in the R4D process. They use different entry points and modes of farmer engagement to achieve these goals (see Table 1).

Table 1. Partnership objectives, poverty focus and mode of farmer engagement

	Main objective	Poverty focus	Farmer engagement
AHI	Market- / value-chain development	Improving rural livelihoods of communities in the humid highlands of eastern Africa	Farmers are involved in all stages, from problem diagnosis, priority setting and planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation
CA	Research	Implementing participatory methodologies and approaches that favour local development and improved livelihoods of the Andean poor, to build evidence and influence public policies and innovation systems	Farmers and rural organizations actively apply the participatory methodologies for research, monitoring and evaluation, empowerment and market articulation

MUSALAC	Research	Improving the targeting of and access to banana and plantain production and processing technology, including germplasm, for smallholder farmers in Latin American and Caribbean countries	Links between researchers and farmers are strengthened by involving the farmers in validating production technologies and increasing their capacity for value addition
KIA	Policy dialogue	Exploring how learning occurs in knowledge-intensive (compared with input-intensive) agricultural systems, with specific emphasis on enhancing sustainable alternatives for small and marginal farmers in India	Farmers participate actively in testing ecological farming methods and innovations as part of work on reconfiguring research systems for better uptake
SDP	Market-/value-chain development	Changing policies that affect the marketing of milk by Kenya's small-scale operators (farmers and traders) in ways that improve their livelihoods	Small-scale informal operators provide or use information to develop acceptable trade practices and influence policy
UPWARD	Sustainable livelihoods and market-chain development	Enabling farming households in the Philippines engaged in sweet potato cultivation to overcome socio-technical constraints to improving their livelihoods	Farmers are engaged through the use of participatory research and development approaches, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal, Farmer Field Schools and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

3.2. Geographic scope of the partnerships

Three of the programmes are regional in scope and three focus on areas within one country (see Table 2). The geographic scope of the partnerships affects management and operations. For example, in multi-country partnerships there is likely to be considerable language diversity. Even with collaborations within a single country, at the level of farmer participation a partnership can be linguistically complex where there are many sub-regions or cultural groups with their own language.

Differences in policy and objectives among countries can also make it difficult to identify common ground for collaboration. Although UPWARD and KIA are presented here as single-country partnerships, they are linked to international efforts. UPWARD Philippines is part of UPWARD's Asia-wide networking programme for participatory research and KIA is linked with other countries through informal practitioner and advocacy networks.

Table 2. Geographic scope of partnerships

Programme	Geographic scope	Number of countries	Countries of operation
AHI	Regional	5	Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
CA	Regional	4	Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru
KIA	National	1	India
MUSALAC	Regional	12	Latin America and Caribbean
SDP	National	1	Kenya
UPWARD	National	1	Philippines

3.3. Duration of the partnerships

Each partnership has its own history and expectations. The oldest partnership is MUSALAC, which has operated for 22 years. UPWARD and SDP have operated for 20 years and AHI for 14 years. All these

programmes have been able to retain the interest of the partners and to attract resources for their activities, usually from donor agencies. CA and KIA are more recent initiatives that are still developing their *modus operandi*.

The issue of expectations is often complicated by the fact that the participants generally would like the partnership to continue for several years, but this often depends upon obtaining external donor resources. For example, CA currently has funding for its operations for only one more year, but the participants hope to obtain new funding for further work. Similarly, AHI has funding for 4 years, but hopes to continue beyond 2010. SDP expects to continue operating for several years, with the partners tackling emerging challenges and opportunities as they arise. MUSALAC, the most formal multi-country partnership arrangement, also expects to operate for several more years by obtaining a series of short-term grants.

Table 3. Duration of partnerships

Programme	Past	Expected future duration
AHI	14 years	4 years (possibly beyond)
CA	2 years	1 year (current funding)
KIA	3 years	Indeterminate
MUSALAC	22 years	10 years and beyond
SDP	20 years	Indeterminate
UPWARD	20 years	3 years (current funding)

3.4. Types of partners

Table 4 presents the categories of partners involved in each programme. AHI and SDP have partners in all categories, and CA and UPWARD have partners in six of the seven partner categories. This is consistent with the objectives of these four programmes to bring about change by helping to create new products and increase the engagement of resource-poor farmers in the market system. KIA involves CSOs, donors, extension, policy and research, but does not engage directly with farmers or market agents. MUSALAC involves only researchers, representing a broad range of within-country partners, but with its new project focused on increasing the links between smallholder banana producers and researchers, it is becoming engaged with a wider range of partners along the production-to-market continuum.

Table 4. Types of partners

Programme	Donor	Extension	Policy	Research	Market	Production	Civil society
AHI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MUSALAC				X			
CA	X	X	X	X	X	X	
KIA	X	X	X	X			
SDP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UPWARD	X	X	X	X	X	X	

3.5. Roles played by partners

The partners in the Learning Laboratory programmes play a range of roles (see Table 5). Advocacy is pursued by CSOs, donors, extension agencies and policy-makers. Technology development is an activity in which donors, extension agents, policy-makers, producers and researchers are involved. Donors, extension agents and researchers usually carry out the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. There is often an effort to involve resource-poor farmers and other marginal groups in programme decision-making and M&E.

Different types of partners play different roles. The groups that have played most diverse roles in the programmes are donors, researchers and CSOs. Donors not only provide resources, but also engage in policy support, M&E, technology development, capacity development, and advocacy. In the KIA programmre, the donor facilitated dialogue and knowledge sharing by establishing a Google Group. The diverse roles played by researchers include policy support, M&E, technology development, capacity development, management and governance. CSOs have also played roles related to policy advocacy,

technology development, capacity development and governance. In the KIA case, they have also contributed to value addition, insofar as this term includes extending the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) to other crops, such as wheat and finger millet.

The specific partner contributions are listed in Table 6. Over time, each partner's contributions (including leadership) might change as the partner's circumstances change and as the partnership itself evolves.

Table 5. Roles played by partners

Role played	Type of partner						
	CSO	**Donor**	**Extension agency**	**Market agent**	**Policy-maker**	**Farmer organization**	**Research organization**
Policy support	X	X			X		X
M&E		X	X				X
Technological development	X	X	X		X	X	X
Capacity development	X	X	X			X	X
Advocacy	X	X	X		X		
Providing resources		X				X	
Credit				X			
Market linkage				X			
Value addition	X			X			
Management	X	X					X
Governance	X				X		X
Product supply						X	

Table 6. Specific partner contributions

CSO
- Establishing pro-poor axioms for research
- Agro-ecological alternatives
- Networks and alternate extension models
- Experimentation and flexibility in complex partnerships
- Specialized knowledge
- 'Noise-making'

Donor
- Technology development/assessment
- NARS capacity development
- Networking
- M&E
- Resource provision
- Technical guidance
- Influencing policy agenda
- Promotion

Extension agency
- Advisory services
- Training farmers and others
- Support for evidence gathering
- Technical support for implementation
- NARS capacity development
- Developing cases
- Technology development
- Rooting SRI
- Establishing ways of promotion
- Research on tools
- Communication

Policy-maker
- Advisory

Farmer organization
- Product supply
- Planting materials
- Development of technologies
- Backstopping
- Training
- Facilitation
- Technical advisor

Research organization
- Represent research and development needs of country
- Executive secretary
- Technical advisor
- Facilitator
- Information strategy
- General management
- Research leadership
- Member of Executive Committee
- Policy and resources support
- Networking
- M&E
- NARS capacity development
- Technology development/ assessment
- Farmer training
- Validation
- Generate information

Market agent
- Micro-credit facilities
- Promoting market involvement
- Planting materials and product supply
- Market linkage

- Legitimization of activities, groups, by-laws, etc.
- Demand of capacity building
- Extension
- Case validation
- Implementation and feedback
- Regulation
- Policy and resources support
- M&E
- Pushing for SRI policy
- Formulation
- Experimentation
- Implementation and production
- Business development service and market outlet
- Commodity flow
- Value addition

3.6. Role of the CGIAR centres

All the Learning Laboratory partnerships, apart from one, have some level of engagement with CGIAR centres. In five of them the level of engagement is high. One partnership considers that it has an adversarial relationship with the CGIAR centre with which it is engaged; this cannot be considered a partnership and therefore is not included in Table 7. The CA and MUSALAC programmes involve partnerships with more than one CGIAR centre.

These centres play a variety of roles in the partnerships. In four programmes the CGIAR partners play more than one role. These include research (4 programmes), capacity strengthening (3), facilitation (2), management (2) and governance (1). Research roles include technology development, technology assessment, evaluation and generation of information for policy processes.

Table 7. Roles and levels of engagement of CGIAR centres

Programme	CGIAR centre	Roles played	Level of engagement[1]
AHI	World Agroforestry Centre	• Research (technology development) • Capacity building (training, backstopping) • Facilitation	5
CA	International Potato Centre (CIP), International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)	• Management • Governance (member of executive committee)	5
	CIP	• Research (and M&E)	3
MUSALAC	Bioversity International	• Management (executive secretary) • Capacity strengthening (technical advisor) • Facilitation • Information management	4
	CIAT	• Capacity building (technical advisor)	1
SDP	International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)	• Research (generating technical information for policy)	5
UPWARD	CIP	• Research (technology development) • Capacity building • Networking • M&E	5

[1] 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

4. Partnership success factors

We have identified a number of factors that we believe have influenced the success or failure of the Learning Laboratory partnerships. These can be grouped into eight broad areas related to partnership establishment and management and two areas related to the environment in which the partnership operates (see Table 8).

Table 8. Partnership success factors

Factors related to partnership establishment and management • Leadership • Vision, goals and agenda • Assessing and engaging partners • Process facilitation • Roles and responsibilities • Communication, knowledge sharing and joint learning • Individual and collective benefits • Change management
Factors related to the external environment of the partnership • Partner organizations' policies, procedures and culture • The external socio-economic and political environment

The first group of factors can be viewed in terms of a 'management and learning cycle', with different factors assuming importance at different times during the life of a partnership. Factors that relate to the management and organization of the partnership itself, shown as the small blue circles in Figure 1, are affected by the organizational and external environments (the larger circles) in which the partnership operates.

In this section we discuss these success factors, how they relate to one another and how they influence the performance of partnerships. Section 5 discusses gaps in our knowledge and priorities for future work in this area.

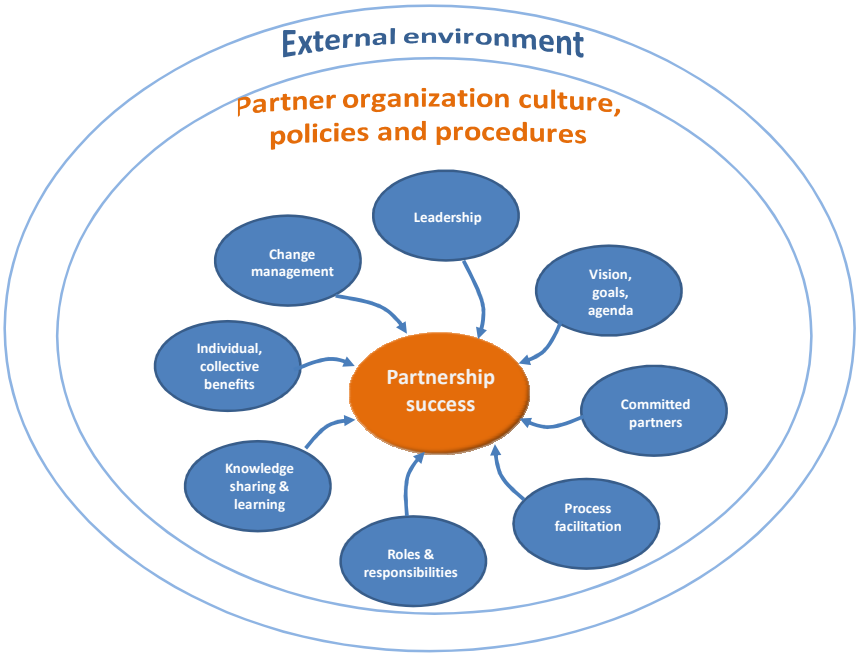

Figure 1: Partnership success factors

4.1. Factors related to partnership establishment and management

4.1.1. Leadership

Leadership has been a critical factor in the success of the Learning Laboratory partnerships. The programmes have shown that partnership leaders / champions are needed who are passionate about the partnership's mission and who are able to mobilize others to achieve common goals. Imbalances in power and resources have been common challenges in the partnerships, and leaders who could act as 'honest brokers' have helped to balance competing interests.

Leadership style is important. Whereas 'command and control' styles might work in certain circumstances (e.g., in traditional hierarchical organizations), they can destroy a partnership. A facilitative style is needed to bring people together in the pursuit of common objectives and to build trust among partners who often have distinct perspectives and conflicting perceived interests. Partnership leaders need to develop credibility based on trust and on the results achieved over time. It is also valuable if they have access to sources of power and resources within participating organizations, donor organizations and the local political establishment, and if they cultivate leadership skills in new organizations joining the partnership, to strengthen the core group of partners. A challenge for all partnerships is how to cultivate dynamic, facilitative leadership and maintain it over time.

Examples of leadership

In MUSALAC, the Bioversity International regional scientists combine technical expertise with administrative and facilitation support to the network, working with the president of the network steering committee who is elected every 2 years. The regional scientists' leadership is strengthened by access to information and experiences from other regions and to the experiences of advanced research partners.

In UPWARD, the partners are recognized as leaders in their own field of expertise. For example, experts at the Tarlac College of Agriculture (TCA) with field experience lead the Farmer Field Schools on integrated crop management and the production of clean planting materials, while local government representatives lead targeting and extension work. The UPWARD co-ordinator leads the institutional learning processes.

In the SDP partnership, a leadership mechanism was established that ensured that each of the lead partners – the Ministry of Livestock Development, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and ILRI – contributed to the project decision-making processes. Formal processes (through a well-structured and systematically interacting steering committee) and informal processes (where the lead partner representatives consulted each other regularly) were used to inform the decisions taken.

The KIA case shows that leaders do not necessarily have to be experts. One of the partners, the Xavier Institute of Management Bhubaneswar (XIMB), created a 'learning alliance' to encourage the flow of information between government departments, CSOs, farmers and researchers, many of whom were working independently on the new SRI way of growing rice. The XIMB soon assumed a leadership role in organizing learning alliance meetings that brought together these actors and used its own research on scaling up SRI to encourage dialogue among them at a meeting in Orissa State. The meeting included people from outside the State and the country, as well whose presence helped take the discussions beyond regional considerations and introduced a culture of sharing and innovation. This institutional innovation of State-level learning alliances has since been taken up in SRI work in other States in India.

4.1.2. Vision, goals and agenda

To ensure partners' commitment to the partnership and the coherence of its activities, a common vision and agenda needs to be developed based on shared interests and goals. It is important to recognize that each partner comes to the table with distinct interests, priorities and agendas that need to be understood and respected. The challenge is not to try to change these positions and values, but to identify common ground on which the partnership can develop a shared vision, goal and agenda. This requires discussing the positions and values of all partners in the initial stages of developing the partnership. Once these are well understood, it is more likely that an effective and shared vision, goal and agenda for the partnership, which respects individual interests, will be developed.

As the priorities and interests of partners change over time, along with the external environment, it is important to revisit the partnership's vision, goals and agenda in order to sustain partner interest and commitment.

Examples of ways of establishing a vision, goals and agenda for a partnership

In the MUSALAC partnership, country representatives raise issues of national interest, while the Bioversity International regional scientist and network advisor add an inter-regional and global perspective. Priorities are identified for short- and medium-term action. Since 2007 MUSALAC has been mobilizing national, regional and private sector interests on greater quarantine vigilance on *Fusarium* Tropical Race 4, a potentially devastating new disease. Other priority issues are addressed through multi-country grants for AR4D.

In UPWARD, the partners considered it important to trace back to own-institution goals, and connect them to the goals of the partnership. The new Sweet Potato R4D Phase 2009-2012, for example, benefited from a series of workshops that reviewed past activities and individual institutional agenda. These were brought forward when partners held a meeting to establish a common vision, goal and agenda on enhancing research involvement in improving the livelihoods of sweet potato farmers in disaster-prone communities.

The SDP had a binding goal that respected the individual missions of each partner – poverty alleviation among livestock-dependent households, which required, as a first step, creating a policy environment that accommodated millions of resource-poor dairy farmers, informally operating small-scale milk traders and associated dependants. These organizational objectives were shared among the partners. When the regulations were changed to accommodate resource-poor actors in the dairy industry, the priority shifted to increasing the benefits they derive from participating in specific market chains.

Establishing a common vision and agenda in the CA partnership was difficult in the initial stages because of the different institutional backgrounds of the partners. For example, the impact evaluation component involved both researchers and evaluators, who had different objectives and evaluation criteria, and there was disagreement between researchers and development practitioners about the future orientation of the project and the time needed for changes in behaviour and knowledge to become evident. The impact pathway model had to be used for the programme in order to determine a clear vision of the future and establish a working agenda. Within this pathway, the partners found common ground that reflected their own visions and agendas and were able to formulate the theory of change for each participatory methodology. This made the planning process easier and the specific contributions more evident, especially in terms of their evaluation.

In KIA, open and frequent sharing of information has played an important role in shaping the partnership vision and goals. An e-group originally meant for the partners has sought the participation of social science research institutes such as XIMB. The nascent SRI community now has more than 350 topics under discussion in this virtual space, tackling such issues as appropriate agricultural tools, pest management and how 'organic' the practice of SRI can become. In complex environments, such open spaces do help to create the vision, goals and agenda for network-based alliances and in many cases can also help in policy dialogue and interventions.

4.1.3. Partner commitment

Forming an effective partnership involves 'knowing your partner' and attracting partners (both organizations and individuals) who not only have the resources and capacities needed to achieve the partnership goals, but who are also strongly committed to the partnership and its goals. Potential partners need to negotiate what each intends to 'give' (resources and capacities) and what each expects to 'take' (the potential benefits of partnering). Productive and committed partners have appropriate resources to contribute to the partnership and they also derive significant benefits from partnering.

The important point to stress is that partners should make deliberate contributions to the partnership and should derive benefits from it. Individuals or organizations might join a partnership for the wrong reason. If they engage in joint activities mainly to obtain funding, rather than to achieve a common objective, their participation can become a burden. On the other hand, if their expectations are unrealistically high, they might become disillusioned and lose interest in the partnership. Potential partners also need to understand the risks of joining a partnership. Working with a group tends to slow down decision making, and if one partner 'drops the ball' this could affect the commitment of the others.

Often, insufficient time and skill is put into assessing the knowledge and other resources of potential partners, or their expectations of the partnership. This can result in including individuals or organizations who have little to offer to the partnership or who feel they are not getting enough out of it to justify the costs of their participation. Lack of attention to partners' competencies can also result in a failure to tap valuable skills and resources that do exist within the group. Lack of attention to expectations and

commitment can lead to turf wars and self-promotion that damage group morale and hinder dialogue, learning and joint activities.

The factors involved in assessing and engaging partners and managing the diversity among them highlight the importance of cultural competence in partnership management. An especially difficult issue is how to handle significant imbalances among partners in their access to resources or their commitment to the partnership. Resource imbalances can sometimes be reduced over time through training and other capacity-building strategies. Lack of commitment can be contagious and it requires quick action, either to rebuild commitment or to arrange the 'graceful exit' of an uncommitted partner.

Levels of commitment, enthusiasm and energy fluctuate over time, pointing to the need for a continuous process of partner assessment and dialogue around issues of costs and benefits.

Examples of ways of engaging appropriate and committed partners

In addition to the annual and bi-annual face-to-face meetings of the partners, MUSALAC also organizes training and scientific exchanges alongside network meetings, provides multi-country grants for AR4D, organizes technical assistance missions on emerging problems and produces specialized publications. Although all partners are not guaranteed the same benefits, they do all have access to some benefits.

In the initial stages of the SDP and during the regular project review meetings, the roles of each partner and their contribution to planned activities were reviewed, along with how the their strengths could be exploited and their weaknesses compensated for, in the context of achieving the partnership goals .

When AHI activities are being implemented, workshops are held to enable partners to talk about their expectations of the partnership and their potential contributions to it. This indicates which partners will be appropriate in addressing the various issues in the project. A strategy for achieving the partnership goal is then jointly drawn up, and is subsequently reviewed and updated regularly to ensure commitment and the ongoing relevance of activities to the partnership as well as to the partners themselves. AHI also organises regular capacity-building efforts for the partners and mobilizes multi-country grants to share with the partners according to their roles in the partnership.

When significant funds are available for a programme, there is always the possibility that some partners will be involved mainly to have access to the funds. To avoid this, the CA programme developed a scoring model matrix that features partner attributes that contribute to programme objectives as well as potential benefits for the partners. Higher values are given to partners that make a significant contribution to the partnership (via skills, competences, resources, etc.), as well as to those who stand to benefit most from the partnership. Appropriate and committed partners tend to be those who benefit most, as they usually find a way to contribute more in order to maintain the partnership.

4.1.4. Process facilitation

Process facilitation is needed to stimulate and channel dialogue, prevent conflicts, build trust and balance competing interests in a partnership. As dialogue and joint decision-making are central to partnering, it is important that leaders be active listeners who ensure that all interests are heard and taken into consideration. Leaders also need to cultivate open and frank discussions, knowledge sharing among partners, and transparent and participatory decision-making. A challenge for many partnerships is to cultivate awareness of the value of professional group facilitation and to mobilize the resources needed for facilitation.

Examples of process facilitation

With the support of ILAC, MUSALAC engaged a facilitator to help the group reflect on achieving greater impact in the forthcoming decade, with special regard to achievements to date. For a partnership activity focusing on plantain production, processing and added value, the inaugural workshop used a participatory planning approach, Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis (PIPA), in order to move beyond individual research outputs and look at cumulative research and uptake in pilot communities.

In explaining the CA initiatives to policy-makers in Bolivia, a young female policy analyst was used as the facilitator and proved invaluable to the process. In a context where there is a large gap between institutions and the public sector, she was able to present research evidence neutrally, thus avoiding mistrust. Her non-threatening image and her good understanding of the interests of both sides enabled her to act as a bridge between actors who later found common ground for collaborative work.

4.1.5. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of individuals in a partnership need to be clearly defined and based on an understanding of and respect for individual interests and capabilities. A common problem with partnerships is the poor understanding of partners' roles and contributions. Early in the establishment of a partnership, it is useful to 'map' the potential roles of partners, and then enable them to 'try on' their new roles and responsibilities to see how well they fit with their work in their 'home organizations'. A common error is to assume that individuals from different organizational settings (e.g., research organizations and NGOs) need to change their 'paradigm' and work together in a totally new way. In many cases, however, successful partnering involves linking up the activities of different organizations more effectively, rather than changing what each organization considers its core activities.

Examples of ways of establishing clear roles and responsibilities

In UPWARD, the current sweet potato R4D partnership benefited from collaborative proposal development, particularly in setting the goals and agenda. The partners then set down the specific activities they would undertake to achieve the goals, allowing them to clearly identify where they could make a clear contribution and add value to the partnership. They pieced their views together to form a comprehensive plan of action with clearly delineated roles for each partner. This was a critical step for the partnership because some partners initially had seen themselves as competitors rather than collaborators.

The case of AHI is similar. AHI engages in collaborative proposal development in which the roles of the partners are clearly spelt out. This is followed up by a joint effort to create work plans and specific activities where partner contributions to common goals are determined.

In the CA partnership, linking the impact assessment component with the implementation component has been crucial in determining responsibilities during the M&E studies (e.g., who should collect the information, and who should make judgements and reach conclusions).

4.1.6. Communication, knowledge sharing and joint learning

An important recommendation from the Learning Laboratory workshop was: "Never leave your partner behind, always keep them informed and engaged." Appropriate mechanisms and processes are needed to promote effective communication, knowledge sharing and joint learning, with time and resources available for this at the initial planning phase and throughout the duration of the partnership. Partners need 'safe spaces' in which to voice constructive criticism and share experiences. Individual and, in particular, group accomplishments also need to be acknowledged.

Much of the knowledge that needs to be shared within a partnership is 'tacit knowledge' that is best communicated through face-to-face interactions, preferably in a field environment. Collective learning is a particular challenge. As one participant noted: "Someone needs to seriously hold up the learning flag." A clear learning strategy needs to be developed and implemented.

All these observations highlight the importance of effectively facilitating interactions to ensure good levels of knowledge sharing and collective learning. In addition, non-controversial entry points for learning are useful. For example, systematic evidence on progress and goal attainment is a useful starting point for discussions in the planning stage on the clarity of goals and the effectiveness of strategies and theories of change. This highlights the potential value of M&E, an area that has received little attention to date.

Face-to-face encounters are, however, not enough. It is also important that key information and lessons be converted into 'explicit knowledge' (e.g., in the form of text, photographs, videos and other media) that can be shared widely and contributes to the institutional memory.

Examples of promoting communication, knowledge sharing and joint learning

MUSALAC usually follows a pattern of intense interaction during the face-to-face biennial meeting and then a quieter period. Electronic communication has greatly facilitated ongoing interaction between meetings, with some partners being very active but others rarely heard online. The network has discussed the value of new electronic tools, but has not yet expanded their use to any great extent.

In UPWARD, the sweet potato R4D partnership holds learning workshops that encourage knowledge sharing. These include the UPWARD network meetings of the past and the less formal workshops of more recent years. The basic elements of these workshops include a review, a reflection and a course of action to

take, with specific tasks allotted. Efforts are made to link these workshops, or at least to recall them in subsequent ones order to provide follow-up as well as learning.

All the major SDP review events (e.g., logframe revisits) are held in up-country retreats away from distractions and the strong influences of the individual partner organizations.

In the CA partnership, joint learning activities on empowerment and market articulation were established; they included virtual learning modules as well as online and face-to-face discussions. Some partners were able to link adequately, but others, particularly those with many technicians in the field, suffered from poor connectivity and frequently missed the events. The methodology therefore had to be changed and more field visits were organized in order to use face-to-face meetings as joint learning opportunities. Particularly important are the annual planning meetings, because they provide an opportunity to co-ordinate and share perspectives and goals.

In AHI, the partners are establishing a knowledge-sharing and communication plan in which all the partners state how they can contribute to the common goal, based on their core goals and interests and on the mode of communication to be used to disseminate different knowledge materials to different partners, depending on their needs, capacity and interests. The AHI partners also benefit from frequent face-to-face interactions through workshops and meetings to plan, monitor and review activities.

4.1.7. Individual and collective benefits

As noted earlier, for partners to remain committed to a partnership, the benefits they derive need to outweigh the costs they incur. On a broader scale, for a partnership to 'add value' to an AR4D effort, the total benefit it generates for individual partners as well as other (intended or unintended) beneficiaries should exceed the costs incurred by the partners in establishing and maintaining the partnership. Too often, these costs are not adequately anticipated in the partnership design, or partners join with false expectations of the likely benefits, leading to disillusionment and loss of commitment. Even when partners join the effort well aware of the potential costs and benefits, maintaining their commitment over time requires the partnership deliver benefits to them over time.

Experience shows that for a partnership to be sustained over time, it needs to deliver significant benefits above and beyond those flowing to the individual members. In strong partnerships, the synergy of individual and social objectives results in overall benefits that significantly exceed the costs. Recognition of collective or social benefits helps to energize the partnership and renew the partners' commitment to it. The benefits might not always be equal, but they need to be equitable.

Examples of individual and collective benefits

A recent activity completed by MUSALAC partners focused on soil and root health. An earlier symposium had raised the issue for scientific debate and FONTAGRO funded a 3-year project on the subject, covering four countries. During the project, the countries benefited through capacity building and site-specific research results useful to targeted groups of growers. There were collective benefits from the cross-country comparisons and from the greater capacity of partners to attract additional funding. A system of homologue zones has been set up to facilitate the extrapolation of results from countries participating directly in the donor-funded projects to other countries that are in the network but not involved in the projects.

In UPWARD, the effort to link sweet potato farmers in the Philippines to markets builds on the principles of collaboration described by Bernet *et al.* (2005). The partnerships develop out of individual interests in making the market chain work both for actors and for support institutions such as research institutes, although they are also aware of the potential collective benefit – demonstrated impact on household incomes due to help from research.

In the SDP partnership, staff from partner organizations (regardless of academic level or professional status) were encouraged to use emerging project information to develop and produce knowledge products (papers, reports, news or book articles, etc.), and these were promoted for use as reference materials. Resources were made available for the staff to make presentations in workshops and conferences in order to communicate emerging knowledge, but also to build the staff's professional careers.

In the CA programme, the challenge of how to evaluate participatory methodologies was the starting point for those involved in the impact assessment component (including researchers from universities, professional evaluation networks, and agricultural research organizations) to discuss experiences and approaches. The work began with an intensive phase of debates and the preparation of glossaries, guides and theories of change. Later, evaluation methods were developed and tested, and the results were published. The work has generated both

individual and collective benefits, with each participant having shared experiences and acquired new learning.

4.1.8. Change management

Critical management tasks vary depending on the stage of development of a partnership. For example, in the start-up phase particular attention needs to be paid to partner selection. Later on, more attention needs to focus on establishing adequate mechanisms for communication, managing joint activities and maintaining partner commitment. Later on still it becomes important for partners to take stock of their accomplishments and shortcomings and consider revising their goals and strategies.

But partnering seldom follows such a neat three-stage model. Partnerships are complex and inherently unstable arrangements that can take unpredictable courses. External or internal shocks might occur at any point, requiring adjustments in activities or strategies, or even transitions to new institutional arrangements.

Over time, partnership priorities are likely to evolve and the activities and output should evolve as well. For example, a partnership that initially focused on research might later need to engage in capacity-building or other development-related activities. The circumstances in which partnerships operate also shift, sometimes dramatically. In some cases (e.g., CA and UPWARD), partnerships are established with donor support and it can be a major challenge to sustain the partnership when the initial funding ends. UPWARD provides a good example of how this can be achieved. Since the AR4D domain supported by UPWARD reflects the core institutional mandate of the partners, the commitment is not limited by a short-term project. In addition, UPWARD has nurtured personal relationships that have sustained interactions beyond the project setting. In all cases, partners can be expected to come and go over time, and as their interests and priorities change so should their roles and the relationships among them. These dynamic elements of partnering highlight the fact that managing change is central to effective partnership management.

Examples of change management

MUSALAC began as the Latin American and Caribbean Network (LACNET), which brought together prominent banana scientists with the emphasis on genetic resources. This reflected the high priority being given at the time to breeding, new cultivars and genetic resource conservation. In the late 1990s, however, the agenda for banana expanded and the regional network was re-organized based on country representatives. More recently, a change in donor funding to shorter-term targeted projects has led to a shift to biennial meetings, with greater use of electronic communication.

The objectives of the SDP programme have changed considerably over 20 years. These changes were influenced by the frequent reviews of the project's progress goal based on information from the dairy industry and on observations by external actors, especially the donor, on how the project could achieve the greatest impact. Initially, the project sought to develop technologies to enhance production at farm level. Mid-way through it, the focus shifted to exploring milk marketing and engaging all types and levels of partners to address what was emerging as the major constraint – access to appropriate and effective markets. The project finally focussed on using information generated over its lifetime to inform policy formulation, especially on the importance of the dairy industry to the country's economy and the constraints inherent in the marketing regulation framework.

AHI has undergone an adaptive learning process, responding to changes in its external environment and taking account of the views of it partners. It is currently in its fourth phase since inception. Initially, AHI was organized around regionally determined technical priorities (e.g., characterization and diagnosis, integrated pest management, and improved soil productivity). It then shifted its approach to participatory research with an integrated systems perspective and multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary teamwork. It funded work at pilot benchmark sites as a way of testing and demonstrating the value of new technologies and modes of working. It later linked farm-level work to improve productivity with collective action to address issues at higher levels. Over time, action research approaches and participatory M&E have been introduced, and AHI now focuses on promoting the use of integrated natural resource management (NRM) approaches, including self-led institutional change (where institutions realize the need to modify and adapt to changing situations as a result of learning) and the development of farmer institutions (supporting capacity building to improve leadership, management and governance). It also empowers farmer institutions to exercise their rights and engage in pro-poor policy development and landscape governance (management of natural resources at landscape level through participatory by-law formulation).

4.2. Factors related to the environment in which a partnership operates

The effectiveness and benefits of working in partnership depend not only on the management and relationships within the partnership itself, but also on the culture, policies and procedures within the partnering organizations and on socio-economic, political and other factors in the broader external environment.

4.2.1. Partner organizations' culture, policies and procedures

The ways that partnerships operate and the results they produce are strongly influenced by the culture, policies and operating procedures that prevail within the partner organizations. If, for example, a partner organization values individual achievement over teamwork, then individuals from that organization might be discouraged from engaging substantially in the co-production of outputs through a partnership. Similarly, if a partner organization has strict rules on intellectual property rights, this could also discourage partnering.

If an organization wishes to work productively in partnership with others, it therefore need to examine its own culture, policies and management practices and, where necessary, make changes to encourage and facilitate partnering behaviour. Management elements that typically require special attention include: human resources (e.g., performance assessment criteria), administration and finance (e.g., procedures for letters of understanding, contracts and audits; and IPR rules that cover the co-production of outputs), planning and M&E (ensuring partners' needs and views are reflected) and assessment of partnership processes.

A common challenge in partnerships is that each partner has its own bureaucratic processes, and these need to be respected. Organizations with hierarchical and rigid structures and procedures can have difficulty operating effectively in a partnership. Bringing about changes in such structures requires support from the highest level of management and, even where this exists, making procedures more partnership friendly requires a change process in the organization that elicits the support and active involvement of middle-level managers.

Examples of how partners' culture, policies and procedures affect partnerships

In a multi-country project that brought together partners from MUSALAC, one partner (a national coffee institute run by growers' organizations) designated its involvement to an organization in another country (a university looking for research opportunities for young professors and students) due to the latter's greater research capacity.

In UPWARD, a lot of time and effort has gone into sorting out project reporting, fund disbursement and reporting, management and co-ordination of a multi-agency sweet potato research activity. These factors were addressed through explicit provisions in memoranda of agreement (MOA), while existing umbrella MOAs and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were reviewed. What could and could not be undertaken by the different partners, and how others could fill the gap, dictated operational details. Transparency in all areas of the partnership was found to be essential to maintain trust among the partners.

In the SDP programme, the three major implementing organizations differed considerably in their accounting procedures, and none was willing (or able) to change their procedures to be more compatible with those of the other partners. To address this, at the beginning of the project the partners developed a unique accounting system for the SDP, which satisfied the donor's reporting requirements, suited the fieldwork and met other accountability requirements. This system was then implemented and hosted in a partner institution (ILRI) that could accommodate separate accounting processes.

4.2.2. External socio-economic and political environment

Partnerships operate in a macro context affected by political and socio-economic currents. In some cases, these favour the partnership mode, in others they do not. When establishing and managing a partnership, it is important to be sensitive to shifting currents in the macro context that can affect the partnership. Where partnerships cross national boundaries, they need to be aware of national issues and trends that influence individual partners' priorities and room for manoeuvre (e.g., one country's national policies might favour market-chain development over small-farm organization, whereas another might favour the opposite; a regional partnership ignores such differences at its peril).

Three specific challenges that the participants in the Learning Laboratory meeting identified were: how to recognize and manage the diversity of partners' contexts; how to build and maintain partnerships in unstable environments; and how to manage the effects of an unstable political environment.

Examples of how the socio-economic and political environment affects partnerships

In a current multi-country MUSALAC project, three of the four partner research institutes are experiencing a period of instability due to personnel changes in the management team, national elections and a rumoured dissolution of the institute. In two cases, the situation is temporary, with little impact on the proposed work, but in the third case a major overhaul of the partnership might be necessary.

The SDP mission was to be implemented in the context of strong socio-economic and political currents and its success depended on a thorough understanding of this context. This was achieved in two ways: carrying out a study of the policy environment and framework that affected the dairy industry (SDP, 2004); and working with representatives who were insiders in the country's policy structures. The Project Steering Committee had representatives from the Ministry of Livestock, KARI and the Kenya Dairy Board who were all senior government officials who were well informed about the country's policy dynamics and, to some extent, influential in the direction it would take.

In the Andean region, while Peru and Colombia favour market-chain development and the decentralization of public policies, Bolivia and Ecuador focus on food sovereignty, recovery of indigenous knowledge and community development. These differences have led CA to be a partnership with different types of institutions in each country working differently according to the context. Having partners with different strengths and perspectives was possible because, despite the different approaches, they were all focused on development and poverty alleviation.

5. Areas requiring further attention

The participants in the Learning Laboratory meeting identified a number of areas where partnering work could be improved, three of which stand out: partner organizations' policies and management practices in support of partnerships, capacity development in partnership management, and evaluation of partnership processes and results (for both learning and accountability).

5.1. Organizational policies and management practices that support partnering

As indicated in Section 4, the policies and management practices of organizations can strongly influence the ways in which they partner with other organizations. Only one of the participating organizations in the Learning Laboratory programmes, ILRI, has developed a partnership strategy and management system, and this has been only partially implemented (ILRI, 2008). Other organizations involved in AR4D could usefully review their policies and management procedures and make needed adjustments in such areas as: priority setting and planning processes; financial management; legal procedures for developing and managing agreements involving partners; performance assessment procedures (for organizations and individuals); human resource policies (including incentives for individual and team achievements, and recognition of the diverse roles of researchers in partnerships); and management of intellectual property.

5.2. Capacity development for partnership management

Working in partnership requires a wider range of skills and abilities than is usually in place in agricultural research organizations. In addition to technical competencies, professionals working in partnership require new skills in management, knowledge sharing, communication, mediation, facilitation of group decision-making, and policy influence. One advantage of working in partnership is that individuals need not develop all the skills needed to achieve a complex task, but can draw on the skills of their partners. To do so, however, requires leadership and management.

In support of the capacity development needed for effective partnering, ILAC offers training in facilitation, policy influence and social network analysis. Much more work, however, is needed in these and other areas if there is to be a significant impact on the capacity of AR4D organizations to work effectively in partnership.

5.3.Evaluation of partnership processes and results

There was a broad consensus among the participants in the Learning Laboratory workshop that improvements are urgently needed in M&E to support both accountability and learning in partnership programmes. Improved M&E is needed in two main spheres: the evaluation of partnering processes (the types of processes outlined in Section 4) and the evaluation of the results of partnering (the value added by partnering, both for the individual partners and for society in general).

The participants highlighted the need for improvements in estimating the costs and benefits of partnering. Prior to committing to a partnership, individuals and organizations would like to have better estimates of the costs, including both monetary costs and time required (for partnership meetings, administration, etc.). The partners and external stakeholders would also like to have better ways of gauging the benefits or 'value added' of partnering (the net benefits of partnering compared with other ways of working). Special attention needs to be given to assessing the intangible benefits. All this information would help potential partners in their decision-making, and would also help to justify and legitimize the involvement of individuals and their organizations in partnership work.

Working in partnership generally involves doing different things and doing things differently. Traditional evaluation methods are better at judging the merits of the former than the latter. Working in new ways in partnership with others produces intangible benefits (e.g., knowledge sharing, capacity development and institutional innovation), which are difficult to evaluate. Having better documentation and evaluation of such benefits would be useful for comparing the potential and actual costs and benefits of working in partnership. Another evaluation concern relates to impact pathways. It is seldom clear how partnering activities and outputs lead to socio-economic and environmental outcomes and impact. Clarification of the impact pathways could help planning partnerships and documenting their results.

Among the Learning Laboratory programmes there are few examples of good practice in this area. Some of them are experimenting with new approaches to partnership M&E. For example, the CA programme is experimenting with a methodology for participatory M&E in the Andean Region in which farmers and other stakeholders in a development initiative evaluate the initiative and propose alternatives for its improvement. The programme also has developed an impact assessment component based on practical methods for evaluating the effects of interventions on changes in stakeholder attitudes and practices. In its future activities, the SDP intends to support improving the capacity for participatory evaluation among resource-poor dairy farmers and other market actors. Thiele *et al.* (2009) have developed an approach for participatory evaluation in the context of a partnership or network; known as Horizontal Evaluation its aim is to foster knowledge sharing, learning and programme improvement.

In 2010, the ILAC Initiative will begin methodological work on impact evaluation for pro-poor, collaborative research programmes which will address these and other questions.

6. Conclusions

What have we learned from the Learning Laboratory workshop that was not already documented in previous reports and publications on partnership (as reviewed by Horton *et al.*, 2009)?

One important thing is that there is substantial diversity in partnership experiences in AR4D programmes, reflected in the six programme experiences that we reviewed in the meeting. Some partnerships focus on research, others on value-chain development and yet others on stimulating policy dialogue. Reflecting these different goals, the types of partners engaged range from researchers alone to highly diverse groups, including extension workers, policy-makers, market agents, small-scale farmers, donors and CSOs. The geographical scope of the partnerships varies, from focusing on one region in one country to working across 12 countries, and the duration of the partnerships ranges from 2 years to more than 20 years. The degree of formality of the partnerships and the management arrangements used vary greatly. For example, participation in MUSALAC is governed by written agreements and formal governance mechanisms, whereas the KIA learning alliance in India is highly informal in its operations. The level of engagement of partners also varies across the partnerships and over time.

An important implication of this diversity, in just our six programmes, is that universal guidelines for partnership management are unlikely to be helpful. Nevertheless, we did identify several common concerns and a set of factors that appear to have influenced the performance of the partnerships. These factors related to the processes of partnership establishment and management and to the external environment in which the partnership operates. Within these two broad groups of factors we identified more specific success factors:

- Factors related to partnership establishment and management:
  - Leadership
  - Vision, goals and agenda
  - Partner commitment
  - Process facilitation
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Communication, knowledge sharing and joint learning
  - Individual and collective benefits
  - Change management
- Factors related to the environment in which a partnership operates
  - Partner organizations' culture, policies and procedures
  - External socio-economic and political environment

Although we have not identified universal guidelines for managing successful partnerships, and believe that the main challenges and locally appropriate solutions need to be identified in each case, we suggest that this list of success factors could serve as a checklist for those engaged in partnership design and management.

We also learned that there a few common priorities for improving partnering work, which fall into three main areas: organizational policies and management practices that support partnering, capacity development for partnership management, and the evaluation of partnership processes and results. We believe that these three areas merit attention within the CGIAR and throughout the AR4D community to strengthen the role of partnerships in achieving development goals.

A final point we would like to make is that the findings presented in this paper have emerged from discussions that took place over a few days in a single workshop, based on our personal experiences with partnerships in six AR4D programmes. The findings should therefore not be viewed as hard-and-fast conclusions based on thorough study, but rather as propositions to be validated, revised or rejected on the basis of further study. As noted by Huxham and Vangen (2005), we believe the best way to enhance knowledge in this area is through systematic action research on the organization and management of partnerships in AR4D.

Annex 1: Participants in the ILAC Learning Laboratory workshop, 2009

Name	Position and organization	Email address
AHI		
Jephine Mogoi	Sociologist, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Nairobi, Kenya	j.mogoi@cgiar.org jephinem@gmail.com
Waga Mazengia	Researcher, Gununo Watershed, Areka Agricultural Research Centre, Ethiopia	waga966@yahoo.com
Zacharia Mkoga	Principal Agricultural Research Officer, Southern Highlands Research and Development Institute, Tanzania	mkogazj@yahoo.co.uk
CA		
Emma Rotondo	Regional Coordinator, PREVAL, Lima, Peru; and CA impact assessment component leader.	emma.rotondo@gmail.com rotondoemma@yahoo.com.ar
Vivian Polar	Research Assistant, Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos (PROINPA), La Paz, Bolivia	vivian.polar@gmail.com
KIA		
Shambu Prasad	Associate Professor, XIMB, India	shambu@ximb.ac.in
A Ravindra	Director, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), Secunderabad, India	ravindra@wassan.org raviwn@gmail.com
MUSALAC		
Charles Staver	Senior Scientist and Project Coordinator, Bioversity International, Montpellier, France	c.staver@cgiar.org
David Brown	IT Specialist, Bioversity International, San Jose, Costa Rica	d.brown@cgiar.org
SDP		
Julius N. Nyangaga	Research Associate, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya	j.nyangaga@cgiar.org
Philip Cherono	Technical Senior Manager, Kenya Dairy Board, Nairobi, Kenya	pcherono@kdb.co.ke
Evans Mwangi	Chief Dairy Technician, Kenya Dairy Board, Nairobi, Kenya	emwangi@kdb.co.ke
UPWARD		
Dindo Campilan	Regional Leader for South, West and Central Asia, International Potato Center, New Delhi, India	d.campilan@cgiar.org
Julieta Roa	Director, Philippines Root Crop Research and Training Center, Philippines	nello_roa@yahoo.com
Lorna Sister	Project Specialist, International Potato Center (CIP), UPWARD Network, Philippines	l.sister@cgiar.org
Knowledge and Monitoring System of SG2000 Innovations in Africa		
Roberto La Rovere	Impact Assessment Specialist, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	r.larovere@cgiar.org
Wondwossen Tsegaye	Research Officer, The Sasakawa Global 2000, CIMMYT, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	wendsentsgay@yahoo.com
Matteo Giancristofaro	Intern, The Sasakawa Global 2000, CIMMYT, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	matteogiancristofaro@hotmail.it
ILAC Initiative Co-ordinating Team		
Jamie Watts	ILAC Coordinator, Bioversity International, Rome, Italy	j.watts@cgiar.org
Doug Horton	ILAC Honorary Fellow, Sarasota, USA	d.horton@mac.com
Cristina Sette	ILAC Programme Specialist, Bioversity International, Rome, Italy	c.sette@cgiar.org

Jurgen Hagmann	Meeting facilitator, Pico Team, Pretoria, South Africa	JHagmann@aol.com

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Annex 3. Summary information on Learning Laboratory partnerships

African Highlands Initiative (AHI)

Goal

To develop methodologies for integrated natural resources management (INRM) and their institutionalization in partner national agricultural research systems (NARS)

Geographic scope

Five East and Central Africa countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda

External environment

There have been major policy changes in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda involving land, which have promoted the AHI activities in the region. Policies on by-law formulation and enforcement at local level have also contributed to the success of AHI. The emerging issues related to climate change have encouraged some of the participating countries to develop measures for mitigating the effects related to, for example, agroforestry and soil and water management.

Outputs

AHI aims to develop methods, tools and approaches on INRM for its partners. Some key outputs include:

- building capacity in natural resource governance
- collective action for community level INRM
- self-led institutional change for INRM
- providing quality support to partner NARS (institutionalization of the INRM approach)

Partners

Type	Name	Role	Level of engagement
Policy	Local Government in participating countries, Kebele Administration (Ethiopia)	Advisory Legitimization of activities, groups, by-laws, etc.	4
Research	ASARECA (PAAP), CIAT, Makerere University, NARS (KARI, KEFRI, EIAR, MARI, NARO, SARI) Sokoine University of Agriculture	Development of technologies Backstopping Training Facilitation	5
Extension	All Ministries of Agriculture in the programme countries, KENDAT	Advisory services Training Dissemination of technologies	5
Production	Farmer groups	On-farm experimentation with new technologies Implementation Production	5
Market	SACCOS, trader organizations, farmer groups	Micro-credit facilities Value addition	2
Donors	AusAID, AAU, DFID, EC, ESPA, FARA, GEF IDRC, IFAD, Italy, SDC, WOTRO	Provision of financial resources Monitoring and Evaluation	5

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

AHI started as a semi-autonomous programme under ASARECA, but has gradually changed due to the restructuring in ASARECA and is now a programme within the World Agroforestry Centre. Since 1995, AHI has gone through three implementation phases and is currently in its fourth phase.

The first phase focused on INRM as the research agenda. This had three main limitations:

- experiments were done on station, and therefore not representative
- farmers were not involved in the process of experimentation
- the experiments were only on IPM, with the focus on soils, and therefore restricted in scope

The lessons and experiences from the first phase informed to the second phase. This phase dealt mainly with on-farm, plot-level research where farmers were involved in experimentation. A diverse number of issues were tested (e.g., crop varieties, soil conservation measures, credit schemes, seed multiplication). The main limitation of this phase was that it was difficult to handle issues that required collective action with the small number of farmers involved. Some issues (e.g., soil and water management) affected both participating and non-participating farmers in terms of land degradation and conflict over resources. Technology dissemination was also slow because of the small number of farmers. The third phase focused on watershed management, taking account of various NRM issues at the landscape level. This phase required the involvement of more farmers to be able to address some of the issues, leading to the development and implementation of a collective action approach.

Organisation

Partnerships in the AHI are mainly voluntary and self-led, with activities being implemented by the partners and the AHI playing a facilitator/backstopping role.

Cambio Andino (CA)

Goal

To influence the national innovation systems in four countries and institutionalize participatory methodologies to promote pro-poor technology innovation.

Geographical scope

Four Latin American countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru

External environment

There is considerable diversity in the political context of the four countries, but they can generally be characterized by high instability and changes in authorities. However, each country has clear long-term goals:

Goal	Bolivia	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru
Food sovereignty	X		X	
Citizen participation	X		X	
Peace building		X		
Inclusion		X		X
Decentralization				X
Market focus				X

Outputs

- Evidence of value-added in the participatory approaches to innovation
- Six of the participatory methodologies implemented in four countries (16 cases in total)
- Policy dialogue tables in at least three countries.

Partners

Type	Name	Role	Level of Engagement
Policy	INIA Peru	Extension Case validation	2
	INIAF Bolivia	Demand of capacity building	1
Research	CIAT	General management Member of executive committee	5

	CIP	Research leadership Member of executive committee	5
Evaluation / research	PREVAL	Leader of the evaluation component	4
	IESE – UMSS	Evaluation process in Bolivia	3
	CIP	Evaluation process in three countries	3
Extension	PROINPA	Technical support for implementing participatory methodologies Capacity building Support for evidence gathering	4
	Corporación PBA		4
	Papa Andina		3
	Other institutions (at least 16)	Develop implementation of participatory M&E	4
Production	At least 20 producer organizations	Implement, validate and adjust participatory methodologies	
Market	Small producer associations Retailers	Involved in every case that promotes market involvement	
Donors	DFID	Resource provision Guidance External Evaluation	2

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

The partners joined the initiative to collectively implement the programme's annual action plan, but other additional activities emerged and parallel processes took place (e.g., a community of practice).

Organisation

Managed by the CGIAR through an Executive Committee comprised of representatives from CIP and CIAT.

Knowledge Intensive Agricultural Systems in India (KIA)

Goal

To understand how learning happens in knowledge-independent intensive agricultural systems (in India) and how it can be promoted..

Geographic scope

India (national)

External environment

The environment is characterized by farmers suicides, environmental stress, the financial unsustainability of Green Revolution agriculture, lack of trust between knowledge generators (farmers, civil society on the one hand, and research agencies on the other), insufficient organizational capacity to respond to complex realities, absence of knowledge brokers, and absence of mechanisms for sharing knowledge and building trust.

Outputs

- Workshops/national symposia on SRI
- E-groups and learning alliance promotion
- Research publications to enhance knowledge and policy dialogue
- Film to explore learning and training
- Research study on decentralized planning for KIA

Partners

Type	Name	Role	Level of engagement
Policy	Civil society network, WWF, XIMB	Promoting SRI policy	5
Research	CRRI, DRR, WTCER	Validating SRI	2
Extension	Agricultural and rural development departments, CSOs	Embedding SRI, establishing ways of promotion, research on tools	3 (State variations)
Donors	Government agencies, bilateral programmes, ILAC, SDTT, WWF	Influencing agenda through funding, livelihood promotion	4
Other	ICAR, IRRI, NFSM	Denial, obfuscation, confusion	1

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

From disparate individual actor-based initiatives to State and national level alliances and embedded networks and partnerships.

Organisation

The initiative is implemented mainly through self-organized networks (including e-groups such as sriindia@googlegroups.com), with a decentralized and democratic approach. A formal steering committee was attempted, but did not persist. Collaborations and partnerships are based on strategic opportunism and around such issues as drought mitigation, weeder designs and creating maps.

MUSALAC Network

Goal

To increase the contribution of banana and plantain to national economies in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an increasing focus on small-holder production. More specifically, to increase the productivity and competitiveness of banana and plantain in the food chain by developing scientific and technological solutions, strengthening NARS and coordinating activities in the region.

Geographic scope

Latin America and the Caribbean

External environment

Research in the region is increasingly viewed within the framework of innovation systems that link producer to market. Generally, countries in the region are facing a decline in public sector investment in extension and technology transfer. They all recognize the importance of poverty reduction and other MDGs in their official policy.

Outputs

- Priority setting for research
- Sharing research and development results
- Awareness raising about emerging problems
- Training on emerging and ongoing themes
- Preparation of concept notes for grant proposals

Partners

Type	Name	Role	Level of engagement
National research organizations	CORBANA CORPOICA, EIAG-Rivas, EMBRAPA, IDIAF, IDIAP, INIAF, INIAP, INIA Peru, INIA Venezuela, INIFAP, INTA Argentina,	Represent research and development needs of a country's banana and plantain sector	2

	SAG		
International research organization	Bioversity International	Executive secretary, technical advisor, facilitator, information strategy	4
International research organizations	CIAT, CIRAD	Technical advisor	1

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

In 1987 a network of genetic resources specialists and *Musa* breeders was launched to promote improved banana breeding and international testing of new and existing germplasm. In 1999 there was a shift to focusing on country programmes and meetings were held annually to set priorities for joint proposals and training, promote exchange of knowledge and conduct strategic training workshops and other events. Since 2006, due to budgetary constraints in Bioversity International, there has been a meeting every 2 years, financed partly by country representatives and partly from funds accumulated by MUSALAC through training seminars and scientific meetings.

Organisation

The network is facilitated and largely financed by Bioversity International, but operates as a steering committee with one representative of each member country. Three countries have requested membership of the network. They will be observers for the first 2 years, until the steering committee approves/votes on their membership.

Smallholder Dairy Project (SDP)

Goal

To explore dairy industry stakeholder relationships in a new policy environment in order to identify gaps and interventions to enhance net benefits to the stakeholders and to the system as a whole.

Geographic scope

Kenya

External environment

A liberalized diary industry and a proliferation of informal milk markets and trading channels

Outputs

Value chain maps on stakeholders, relationships, capacity gaps and intervention suggestions

Partners

Type	**Name**	**Role**	**Level of engagement**
Policy	Kenya Dairy Board, Ministry of Livestock	Formulation, implementation and feedback	5
Research	ILRI, KARI, Tegemeo	Generate information	5
Extension	BDS agents, Ministry of Livestock	Communicate, capacity building	3
Production	Farmers, farmer groups	Produce milk	3
Market	Kenya Dairy Board, traders, transporters and processors	Commodity flow, value addition Regulation	5

Donors	DFID, ILAC Learning Laboratory	Resource provision	3
Others	Civil society, media	'Noise-making'	5

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

Initially, the project focused on the roles of producers and greater engagement with market actors and policy-makers. Now the focus is on reducing production costs and making the overall value chain system more competitive. Policies have improved trade relationships and business benefits. The role of research is less clear, and tends to focus on chain structure and relationships to support information generation on challenges and opportunities.

Organisation

Self-organizing team

Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (UPWARD)

Goal

To achieve sustainable sweet potato production through integrated crop management and value chain improvement in Central Luzon, Philippines

Geographical scope

Central Luzon, Philippines (Bataan and Tarlac provinces)

External environment

Livelihood improvement was needed in the aftermath of volcanic eruptions and pest and disease pressures in the 1900s. As a crop adapted to resource-poor conditions, sweet potato has become a key livelihood crop in the area. Increased NARS capacity for sweet potato R&D has become a priority as the national programme has recognized the importance of sweet potato to small farmer livelihoods.

Outputs

Output	**Outcomes expected**
Quality planting materials	Expansion of quality planting materials production to at least 2000 ha Movement towards institutional arrangement for seed quality certification/assurance piloted Increase in average yields among farmers practising adapted ICM
Suitable sweet potato varieties for various uses; strategies for use-driven genetic resources conservation	Increase in varieties grown linked to uses Increase in average yield among farmers practising adapted ICM
Field-tested integrated crop management practices	Farmers in specific agro-ecologies practising IPM/ICM appropriate for the biophysical conditions
Human resources for continuing capacity development in crop management	Capacity development activities (e.g., Farmer Field Schools) integrated into local extension activities
New sweet potato business opportunities established	Increased participation in and benefits for farmers and processors in sweet potato value chains

Partners

Type	Name	Role	Level of engagement
Policy	Provincial Government of Tarlac	Policy and resources support	3
Policy	Municipal governments	Policy and resources support	3
Policy, donor	PCARRD	Policy and resources support; M&E	5
Research, donor, policy	Regional Department of Agriculture	Policy and resources support	5
Research, donor	CIP-UPWARD	Technology development and assessment; NARS capacity development; networking; M&E	5
Research, extension	PRCRTC	Technology development; NARS capacity development	5
Research, extension	NPRRTC	Technology development; NARS capacity	3
Research	University of the Philippines, Los Banos	Technology development and assessment	5
Research	TCA	Technology development and assessment; farmer training	5
Extension	Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, Tarlac	Farmer training	4
Extension	Municipal Agriculture Office	Farmer training	4
Production	Farmers	Product supply; beneficiaries	5
Production	Processors	Product supply	4
Production, market	Farmer co-operatives	Planting materials; product supply	5
Market	Traders	Market linkage	5
Market	San Miguel Corporation	BDS and market outlet	5

Note: 1 = low level of engagement; 5 = high level of engagement

Evolution

Period	Focus	Organizations involved	Significant events
1997-1998	Farmers reported major crop losses due to virus disease outbreak, closure of starch processing plants, and continuing mudflows after volcanic eruption	CIP-UPWARD, CLSU, DA, PCARRD, TCA	Sweet potato livelihood crisis prompts R&D sector to take action
1998	Needs and opportunities assessed for enhancing sweet potato food and livelihood systems	CIP-UPWARD, CLSU, PhilRootcrops, TCA	R&D interventions begin to shift from crop-focused to livelihood systems R&D perspectives
1998-1999	Technology components for clean planting materials and ICM developed	CIP-UPWARD, CLSU, DA, PCARRD, TCA	National government reclassifies sweet potato as a high-value crop for priority R&D funding

2000	Community-based strategy in producing clean planting materials initiated	CIP-UPWARD, TCA	Tools of global science (tissue culture, virology) given to farmers
2000-2002	Farmer Field Schools on ICM implemented in partnership with local governments	CIP-UPWARD, CLSU, DA, Provincial and municipal governments, TCA	Inter-agency partnerships expanded and strengthened
2003-2005	Farmer Field Schools on sweet potato feed utilization implemented	CIP-UPWARD, DA, TCA	Non-marketable sweet potato roots become avaluable feed resource
2005	On-farm strategy initiated to conserve and use sweet potato diversity	CIP-UPWARD, UPLB	Diversified markets and users stimulate conservation of sweet potato diversity
2006	Small-scale snack food enterprises and market links with feed industry developed	CIP-UPWARD, NPRCRTC, PhilRootcrops, private sector, TCA	R&D interventions begin to adopt a market chain perspective
2005-2007	Evaluation conducted of the livelihood outcomes of technological innovations	CIP-UPWARD, DA, TCA, UPLB	Evidence generated on the livelihood outcomes from technological interventions
2008	National government offers funding for scaling-up sweet potato research and development	CIP-UPWARD, PCARRD, PhilRootcrops	R&D efforts contribute to increased policy and funding support to sweet potato-based livelihoods

Organisation

A network based on inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary teams.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AAU	Association of African Universities
AHI	African Highlands Initiative
AR4D	agricultural research for development
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
AusAID	Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
CA	Cambio Andino
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIP	International Potato Center
CIRAD	Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement
CLSU	Central Luzon State University
CORBANA	Corporación Bananera Nacional
CORPOICA	Corporacion Colombiana de Investigacion Agropecuaria
CRRI	Central Rice Research Institute
CSO	civil society organization
DA	Department of Agriculture
DFID	Department for International Development
DGIS	Netherlands Directorate-General of Development Cooperation
DRR	Directorate of Rice Research
EC	European Commission
EIAG-Rivas	Escuela Internacional de Agricultura y Ganaderia
EIAR	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research
EMBRAPA	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
ESPA	Ecosystems Services for Poverty Alleviation
FARA	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
FONTAGRO	Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
ICM	integrated crop management
ICRAF	World Center for Agroforestry
IDIAF	Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuarias y Forestales
IDIAP	Instituto de Investigación Agropecuaria de Panamá
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IESE	Instituto de Estudios Sociales y Económicos
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILAC	Institutional Learning and Change
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
INIA	Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agronomica
INIAF	Instituto Nacional de Innovación Agropecuaria y Forestal
INIAP	Instituto Nacional Autónomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias
INIFAP	Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agricolas y Pecuarias
INRM	integrated natural resources management
INTA	Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria
IPM	integrated pest management
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
KEFRI	Kenya Forestry Research Institute
KENDAT	Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies
KIA	Knowledge Intensive Agricultural Systems in India
LACNET	Latin America and Caribbean Network
M&E	monitoring and evaluation

MARI	Mikocheni Agricultural Research Institute, Tanzania
MOA	memorandum of agreement
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MUSALAC	*Musa* Network for Latin America and the Caribbean
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organization
NARS	national agricultural research system
NFSM	National Food Security Mission
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPRCRTC	Northern Philippine Root Crops Research and Training Center
NRM	natural resources management
PAAP	Policy Analysis and Advocacy Programme
PCARRD	Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development
PM&E	participatory monitoring and evaluation
PMCA	Participatory Market Chain Approach
PNAS	Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences
PRCRTC	Philippine Root Crops Research and Training Center
PREVAL	Platform for Monitoring and Evaluation for Rural Development in Latin America and Caribbean
PROINPA	Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos
R&D	research and development
SACCOS	savings and credit co-operatives
SAG	Sociedad Argentina de Genética
SARI	Savannah Agriculture Research Institute
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SDP	Smallholder Dairy Project
SDTT	Sir Dorabji Tata Trust
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
TCA	Tarlac College of Agriculture
UMSS	Universidad Mayor de San Simon
UPLB	University of the Philippines Los Baños
UPWARD	Users' Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development
WASSAN	Watershed Support Services and Activities Network, India
WOTRO	Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research and part of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)
WTCER	Water Technology Centre for Eastern Region, India
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature